

# The Emergence of the News Paradigm in the English Provincial Press

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**The emergence of the news paradigm in the English provincial press.** A case study of the *Midland Daily Telegraph*.

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**Abstract**

This study suggests a time frame for the emergence of modern news writing style in the mass-market English provincial newspaper. Drawing on the research carried out by Horst Pottker (2003), a qualitative analysis of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* sampled over a 10-year period between 1895 and 1905 demonstrates the process by which news becomes increasingly presented according to the conventions of the inverted pyramid by identifying key shifts in writing style. At the same time elements of editorial innovation (namely developments in the labelling and organisation of content, an increased emphasis on sport, the organisation and presentation of advertisements and the paper's promotion of itself as an advertising medium) are identified to demonstrate that this evening paper is developing rapidly as a commercial product. As such it supports Pottker's suggestion that news writing is one method by which a paper improves its "communicative quality" (2003: 501) with its readers in order to improve its commercial impact.

**Key words:** English provincial newspaper; inverted pyramid; New Journalism; newspaper practice.

## **I. Introduction.**

Studies of the emergence of New Journalism have characterised the process in terms of key professional characteristics – the emergence of the convention of objectivity (or impartiality or fairness) and the emergence of a specific ‘news paradigm’ (Matheson 2000; Pottker, 2003; Conboy 2004; Hoyer and Pottker 2005). It has also come to imply advances in journalism practice, including the use of the interview, increased emphasis on the human interest story and improvements in layout (Benson 2009; Conboy 2004; Hampton 2008). However, these studies are less specific about the timing of this process and typically give it a wide time frame – from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

In his 2003 paper, “News and Its Communicative Quality; the inverted pyramid – when and why did it appear?”, Horst Pottker succinctly defines the inverted pyramid as copy which demonstrates the “lead-and-body principle” and which “answers to four or five w-questions at the beginning of the article” (2003: 501). He employs a diachronic content analysis of the *New York Herald* and the *New York Times* to narrow down the time frame for the emergence of the inverted pyramid to the ten years between 1880 and 1890.

This enables him to present the hypothesis that this news style became dominant during the time of the American Civil War, not because of technological, political or economic needs (2003: 501), but because of its potential to improve the communicative quality of the newspaper content at a time when it was becoming a mass-market product. This process is, therefore, seen in tandem with other characteristics designed to increase the efficacy of the product, such as improved layout and use of illustrations.

This study seeks to suggest a time frame for this process in the English regional press via the case study of the *Midland Daily Telegraph*, a typical provincial newspaper in England. It does this in two ways: firstly, by charting changes to editorial copy, including the increased degree to which it demonstrates the characteristics of the inverted pyramid, and secondly, by identifying key changes in the organisation, selection and range of editorial and commercial content to demonstrate the newspaper’s increased sophistication as

a mass-market product. This analysis suggests that this increased adherence to the professional norm of the inverted pyramid emerges as the newspaper refines its commercial identity during the comparatively defined time frame of 1895 to 1905.

It should be noted that the emergence of the inverted pyramid is not a sudden rupture with past editorial practice; instead this analysis suggests that innovation is a gradual process whereby the style of editorial presentation is negotiated by provincial newspaper workers who are exposed to innovations elsewhere in the profession, for instance via copy transmitted by the telegraph, or via early advertising copy. This transmission is exemplified in the reporting of Queen Victoria's funeral in 1901, which sees the same reporting style adopted in both national and local reports – perhaps via mimicry by writer or subeditor – in an adherence to what we today understand as newspaper 'house-style'. By 1905 the innovation is becoming routine and local reports themselves appear which adhere to the inverted pyramid principle.

These developments, described in detail in this paper, are foregrounded by the columns of the newspaper itself, which are used to draw attention to professional innovations such as the overt use of the editorial interview. The *MDT* is increasingly 'selling' itself as an advertising medium and we see evidence in its columns of its internal organisation. The newspaper is also diversifying into one which can sell the by-products of producing newspapers such as illustrations or photographs. This overt business acumen suggests an awareness of the importance of the newspaper as a commercial enterprise and it is reasonable to suppose that editorial workers want to contribute to this success by reaching as many readers as possible.

### **Context**

The *Midland Daily Telegraph (MDT)* was founded by William Issac Iliffe, whose family still owns newspapers under the auspices of Iliffe News and Media, and Henry Sturmey in 1885 in Coventry. Iliffe was the son of a bookseller and printer,

based in Hertford Street – the home of the paper until the Second World War. In 1879 he launched *The Cyclist* at a time when Coventry was at the heart of the cycling industry and followed this by purchasing *Bicycling News* in 1885, which was edited by a then 21-year-old Alfred Harmsworth. In 1879 Iliffe bought the weekly *Coventry Times* and in 1891 he expanded into daily newspapers, launching the *Midland Daily Telegraph* with £2,500 capital. At that time Coventry was a competitive place for newspapers. With a population of around 52,000 it was already served by the weekly papers *Coventry Standard*, the *Coventry Herald* and the *Coventry Reporter*, in addition to the *Coventry Times* and the daily *Birmingham Evening Mail*. But clearly Iliffe felt there was room for a dedicated evening paper in the city and the *MDT* was first published on February 9, 1891 according to ‘independent Liberal principles’ (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 1991) and by 1905, the first year for which figures are available, circulation was put at 10,000 (Rhodes, 1981).

The *MDT* was launched at a significant time for the English provincial daily newspaper industry, which was on the cusp of change from one predominantly owned for political gain to one firmly established as a commercial interest. In the process of redefining its role in the wake of the wane of an overt political stance, the provincial daily press adopted the strategy of constructing information according to a particular set of norms which give rise to what we still largely understand as ‘news’. During the period of study, the *MDT* is priced at one half penny, which puts it firmly in the camp of the ‘popular’, mass-market evening papers. As such, the business model is reliant on advertising revenue, sustained by a mass readership to attract that advertising.

This period is also one of rapid expansion in the regional daily newspaper market. In 1900 there were 196 local daily papers and an estimated 2072 weekly papers – although this figure was to drop after the First World War in the wake of the incursion of the metropolitan London press into the regional newspaper market; by 1920 this figure had fallen to 169 (Curran et al, 2003: 33). The *MDT* is still published today under the name of the *Coventry Telegraph* and has a sales figure of 32,600 (ABC Total Average Net Circulation/ Distribution Per Issue 04 Jul 2011 - 01 Jan 2012).

## **Methodology**

This case study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to posit the development of news writing in one particular genre in the context of that genre – in this case the English provincial evening newspaper. As such it situates a qualitative analysis of the news story in the context of the paper as a whole – with a particular focus on range and organisation of content, layout, advertising (both display and classified) and the paper's promotion of itself. This qualitative approach is complemented by a diachronic quantitative assessment of targeted aspects of the newspaper's content.

The period of qualitative analysis is the years between 1895 and 1905; this period was selected as one in which the *Midland Daily Telegraph* has become an established business and also one in which an initial survey had identified as including a change in news presentation. To limit the study to a manageable size, the editions in the first week of February in each of the years of this decade were subjected to close reading for qualitative purposes. February was selected not only because it is the month when the paper was founded, but also because of its unexceptionalness in the news calendar – uninterrupted by such events as annual holidays. As such seven papers from each of the 10 years were read.

To complement this, the quantitative analysis measured the proportions of varying elements of newspaper content during the same period. The content surveyed included: local news (local defined as Coventry and the county of Warwickshire), local sport, display advertising, classified advertising, and advertisements which promote the newspaper itself (self-promotion). Using PDFs accessed via the British Newspaper Archives website, the editions from the first Friday, Saturday and Monday of each February were printed out and the proportions of content were calculated as a percentage of the total column centimetres in each edition. This enabled a calculation to ascertain the total column centimetres dedicated to advertising, editorial and self-promotion by the title. This analysis was limited by the availability of these PDFs to the years 1895, 1896, 1899, 1901, 1902 and 1903. While the results are inevitably based on a small sample, they still offer a useful insight into the qualitative analysis. This

analysis could also be applied to other titles in order to test the hypothesis suggested by this paper.

This approach has enabled me to contextualise the emergence of the inverted pyramid within the wider life of the newspaper. The significance of this approach is, as Jensen (2002) posits, that it enables the *relationships* (my emphasis) between phenomena to be tested. In this instance the key relationship is between the emergence of the inverted pyramid (as assessed by the qualitative analysis of news stories), with the newspaper's development as a commercial product (as evidenced by the ratio of advertising to editorial and the paper's own use of self-promotion techniques). As such, this study enables us to establish what else was happening in the columns of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* as the inverted pyramid emerged; as such it can contribute to an understanding of why this change may have occurred.

## **II. The development of the Inverted Pyramid in the *Midland Daily Telegraph***

The inverted pyramid is a narrative structure, usually applied to the hard news story, whereby the key information (the five Ws) is included in order of descending significance. Pottker (2005) argues that this structure makes news easier to read – and to sub-edit – as the least important information can simply be cut from the bottom. He argues that its emergence is based on a convention, whereby journalists prioritise what they see as the most important information, which became prevalent in US journalism from 1875 and was established practice 20 years later. Concomitant with the rise of the inverted pyramid were other changes in newspapers, including the inclusion of more, shorter stories; the use of headlines and illustrations and interviews, and the clearer organization of news into defined sections, which together have been termed New Journalism. Following AJ Lee, New Journalism “can best be described as a mixture of journalistic and typographical devices, which taken together constituted a new style of journalism, a style which reflected a changing relationship between the newspaper and its readers” (1976: 120).

Both Friedrich Ungerer (2002) and Alan Bell (1998) link the emergence of the “top down” structure of writing demonstrated by the inverted pyramid to changing journalism practice in an increasingly commercialised press. Bell relates its popularity to the increasingly time-critical publication schedule which privileges a presentation style which can disguise the age of stories (1998: 201). Ungerer links its emergence to the professional practices surrounding certain types of content (especially court reports and accident and disaster stories) and the use of multi-headlines, which privilege remarkable facts over chronological order and which prepare journalists for the “gradual” introduction of the inverted pyramid (2002: 94).

This study charts the emergence of the inverted pyramid in the *Midland Daily Telegraph* over the 10-year period specified. At the beginning of the time frame a significant (indicated by its four-deck headline) but local story is largely presented chronologically.

### THE ALLEGED BEDWORTH



ELOPEMENT.  
A CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY.  
PRISONERS BEFORE THE MAGISTRATES.

“A young man and women left Bedworth about a month ago under circumstances which created a good deal of stir in the little mining town. There was considerable interest taken in the case when the couple were brought before the county magistrates sitting at Coventry this morning. The charge was that William Farndon and Dora Freeman had stolen and carried away £40 belonging to William Farndon, of the Woodlands Farm, Bedworth.

“The male prisoner was described as a miner and his companion, a rather comely young woman, as a domestic servant. She was said to be 17 years of age next April. Farndon is a married man with two children.”  
(MDT, 1.2.95; 2)

After setting the scene in this introduction, the story continues as a report of the court hearing, largely following the actual order of the proceedings. As such there is no adherence to the style of news writing as defined by the principles of the inverted pyramid and this style of presentation is typical of that for stories concerning the local area.

However, news concerning events from further afield is characterised by a more succinct writing style. These stories were probably drawn from news agencies which ‘wired’ copy to provinces via the telegraph. A story headed “Daring Theft at Glasgow: A Bag Containing £300 Seized” reads:

“A most daring theft of a bag containing over £300 took place at Queen Street Station, Glasgow, at ten o’clock this morning. The bag was in the charge of an elderly cashier, who was going to pay the wages of his employer’s workmen. He was followed by a man who snatched the bag from him, and disappeared in the crowded station. The thief is still at large.” (MDT, 1.21895: 3)

This divergence between the writing styles demonstrated here has given rise to the hypothesis that the use of the inverted pyramid was prompted by the technological needs of the telegraph service (critically assessed by Pottker 2005: 54-55). However, closer attention to the content of the *MDT* shows us that the reporters themselves were also aware of changes to journalism practice. For Schudson (2005), this process of self-articulation results in the normative influence of values on a profession, and ultimately, the absorption of imperatives and techniques into governing codes. Here we see that process of articulation manifest in the columns of the newspaper itself; in the “Bedworth Elopement”, the reporter justifies the reason for the story being reported (it caused ‘considerable interest’ when it happened), just as they cite the source of their national and international stories, such as a “*Pall Mall Gazette* telegram” (Cricket in Australia, *MDT* 1.2.1895: 3) or a “Dalziel telegram” (Desperate Fight with a Lion, *MDT* 1.2.1895: 3).

This self-articulation is also evidenced in the increased incursion of the interview into the reporter’s tool kit. Page four of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* of February 1, 1895 includes an extended interview, self-consciously referenced as from the *Essex Telegraph*.

“In consequence of instruction received to interview a lady who seems to have been a lamentable instance of hospital failure, an *Essex Telegraph* reporter called upon Miss Louisa Fenner, at Great Lane, Ardleigh, Essex. Miss Fenner told the following story ...” (*MDT*, 1.2.1895: 4)

In fact reading on, the interview is a testimonial for a commercial product, Dr Williams’ Pink Pills. The interview is not yet seen by editorial staff as a full-blown journalistic method, but as a way, perhaps, of distancing the paper from testimonials for products by attributing them to someone else. This is even more marked when contrasted with the paper’s willingness to employ a first-person stance, as seen in its editorial columns, although the use of inverted commas around ‘interview’ suggests it is still a term for comment.

“Tramps seem to me becoming more numerous on the Queen’s highway. Whatever doubts I may have had on the point were dispelled in the course of an accidental “interview” I had the other day with “one o’the’reg’lare perfession” as he admitted himself to be.” (*MDT*, 2.2.1895: 2)

This suggests the reporters are in the throes of negotiating their way through changing journalism practice. The fact that they give room to the conscious discussion of these methods in the columns of the paper also suggests that it is an editorial methodology with which the readers need to become familiar too; the communicative quality will be only improved by a ‘consensus’ over reporting methodology and this process is subject to limited narration through the columns of the paper as methods are subject to experimentation.

A key event for the development in news presentation in the *Midland Daily Telegraph* is the death of Queen Victoria, which received extensive coverage in February 1901. The death of the monarch was actually reported in the papers of Tuesday, January 22 and Wednesday, January 23 in editions featuring the traditional black gutters as a mark of respect. However, more interesting for the purpose of emerging reporting styles is the edition of February 2, 1901, which includes news feature-style reports of the funeral itself. Almost the entire page three was devoted to national and local reports of the event and the similarity between the presentation of editorial copy drawn from various sources can clearly be seen; both are descriptive and attempt to capture the mood of a country in mourning. Thus we have:

“A cold grey morning, with fine rain and threatening a continuance, was the depressing state of the weather at Portsmouth this morning, as the day of the funeral of the beloved Queen Victoria dawned.” (*MDT*, 2.2.1901: 3)

There is no indication of the source of this information so we cannot determine if this was as written by an agency or by a member of staff but a report of scenes in London is in a similar tone:

“The City of the Empire wore a weird aspect this morning at a time when the whole of another busy day is usually inaugurated.

“Of business life there was no sign. Shops that usually drove a thriving trade before breakfast remained firmly closed. The early wagons and market carts were conspicuously absent.”(*MDT*, 2.2.1901: 3)

Turn then to reports of events in Coventry – which, one supposes, could only have been provided by staff reporters:

“The day in Coventry was indeed of a gloomy character. Following a light fall of snow during the early morning covering the face of the city with a white pall the aspect changed, with falling sleet, giving a muddy, sombre appearance to the streets. The closing of the business houses and factories was general. Flags were at half-mast upon the churches and public buildings, while the mourning boards of the shopkeepers and drawn blinds at private houses testified to the local share in the national grief.” (*MDT*, 2.2.1901: 3)

These similarities in reporting in the frame of one unifying event, evidence the increasing convergence of journalistic technique between national and provincial reporters

By 1902 local news, as well as telegraphed news, is increasingly written in a way which adheres to the conventions of the inverted pyramid and it is not too difficult to imagine this story – albeit with some changes to the language used – appearing in a modern newspaper.

### SHOCKING DISCOVERY NEAR COVENTRY

“The dead body of a newly-born was found this morning squeezed into an old tin kettle, near Stoke Heath Common. P.C. Sexton was on duty in that district and when passing along the Canal path, which is close to the Common, he found the body, contained in the kettle, concealed in some

gorse. The body was that of a male child and was slightly decomposed. It was taken to a mortuary at the Coventry Workhouse to wait the inquest, the Coroner's officer, Mr T Golby, making inquiries in the meantime." (MDT, 7.2.1902: 3)

The development of news presentation continues so that by 1905, the sample evidences that local reporters are also employing techniques of eye-witness testimony and drama to enliven the coverage of significant local stories, as in "The Binley Tragedy" - a sorry tale of man tried for the murder of a young girl by cutting her throat. This report of a preliminary hearing before magistrates gives every detail it can in order to dramatise a story of great interest to its readers to the extent that it fill two entire columns of page three. Assuming the reader already knows of the crime having read earlier reports of the incident, this court report gets straight to the point while the journalist embellishes it with additional detail.

"The hearing of a charge of wilful murder against Edgar William Roberts, of 19, Leopold Street, Coventry, was proceeded with at the Coventry Police Court at Coventry today. The charge against the accused was that on the night of November 31 he did feloniously and of malice aforethought, kill and slay one Annie Elizabeth Elliott Earls at Coombe Fields. Accused was remanded on Tuesday last until today. He was brought over from Warwick Gaol this morning in the company of a warder. There was a large crowd in the vicinity of the court, and the whole of the accommodation was quickly taken up." (MDT, 3.2.1905: 3)

When compared with the "Bedworth Elopement" cited above, the reporter does not justify the coverage by telling us of the "considerable interest", the interest is demonstrated as a fact by the inclusion of details about the crowd. This is the first paragraph of a lengthy story and it clearly tells us who, what, where, when, why, in accordance with the convention of the inverted pyramid, thereby demonstrating the extent to which the practice has become a norm for the provincial reporters of Coventry.

The report of a coal mining accident - headlined "Accident at Wyken Colliery", (MDT: 13.2.05:3) is typical of how the factual presentation of news has become standard with the emphasis on the timeliness of this report, which concerns events of the day of publication.

"An accident occurred this morning at the Wyken Colliery, two men being injured. About seven o'clock Joseph Launchbury, Grange Lane, Foleshill, and Richard Henry Bennett, of the Jolly Collier Inn, Sowe Common, were working together in the pit, when a fall of roof occurred. The coal fell across both men. Assistance was promptly rendered, and the injured men were taken out of the pit. Dr Hadley, Shilton, was sent for. It was found that Launchbury was seriously injured, and he was promptly removed to the Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital. Bennett had received injuries to the lower part of his body, and he was conveyed to his home.

"Launchbury is a young single man. Bennett is the landlord of the Jolly Collier Inn, but he also works in the pit. He was later in the day reported to be progressing favourably.

"On inquiry at the Hospital it was stated that Launchbury was suffering from injuries to the back. His age was given as 27."

### **III. The professionalization of editorial presentation.**

This study of the emergence of modern news style in the *MDT* is set against the backdrop of a paper which is explicitly developing into a sophisticated advertising vehicle, for others and itself. Throughout the period studied, the *MDT* is a four-page, broadsheet paper. For most of this period it is set across seven columns until a new press in 1905 enables it to be set across eight columns. The paper first physically measures 20 inches by 24 inches (approximately 51cms by 70cms), with each of the seven columns measuring 2.5 inches (*MDT* 2.1.1899). The paper then increased in size slightly to 22 inches by 26 and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches. At this stage the paper was set in eight columns (*MDT* 7.5.1910).

In 1895 the pattern of content is: front page, display adverts (appendix 1); page two adverts, leaders and some news; page three is the main news and sport page and page four is more feature-led content and classified adverts. However, this organisation is neither set nor consistent and the line between adverts and editorial remains blurred by the use of such techniques as interviews for promotional purposes. However, by 1904 the delineations are both marked and adhered to.

The key areas analysed here include: the proportion of local news, local sport, the amount of advertising and the paper's use of its own columns to promote itself as a business (termed here 'self-promotion'). These elements are among those cited by academics as characterising the practice of "New Journalism", a revolution in journalistic technique which is widely credited to Alfred Harmsworth with his innovative approach to both owning and editing the *Daily Mail*. Conboy (2004) argues that Harmsworth's New Journalism becomes less partisan and more anodyne in a bid to attract as many readers as possible. Thus the "New Journalism" we see is a product of the commercial logic on the new relationship between newspaper and reader which is manifest in a new-look newspaper both in terms of content, such as an increased emphasis on human interest stories, sport, crime and entertainment, and layout with the inclusion of headlines and illustrations (Conboy, 2004: 172).

Donald Matheson (2000) takes the emergence of New Journalism as a watershed in the shift between the pre-modern and modern newspaper

characterized by the emergence of a definable 'news discourse', where by news is reported as fact, rather than as attributed to a third party. Matheson argues that during this period journalists are able to frame information within the context of the newspaper story by editing, summarizing and contextualizing – and thereby creating the modern news story as information in itself rather than the representation of information disseminated by a third party. Typical of this shift is the collection of connected events into one story – as exemplified by the reporting of the drowning of 400 people in a night of storms in 1895. While most newspapers carried a series of stand-alone paragraphs concerning the events, the *Yorkshire Post* alone reported the storms as a single event. In the former, readers were expected to draw their own inferences from the information provided; in the latter, the journalist had collated and presented the information into an intelligible and logically coherent report (Matheson, 2000: 565-8).

We can see this process evidenced in the *Midland Daily Telegraph's* coverage in February 1900 of the Boer War, which had begun five months previously. Although the coverage is physically grouped together in the same columns, there is little evidence of the information being brought together and joined into one unifying narrative, although there is coverage from a local angle – the role of the cycle, as built in Coventry, in the war effort (*MDT*, 1.2.1900: 2). However, by 1902 we see examples of news being increasingly organized along thematic lines and it is notable that reports of fires are grouped together under one headline "Serious Fires" in the edition of Monday, February 3 and unified by a lead introduction.

"Several serious fires are reported from various parts of the county.

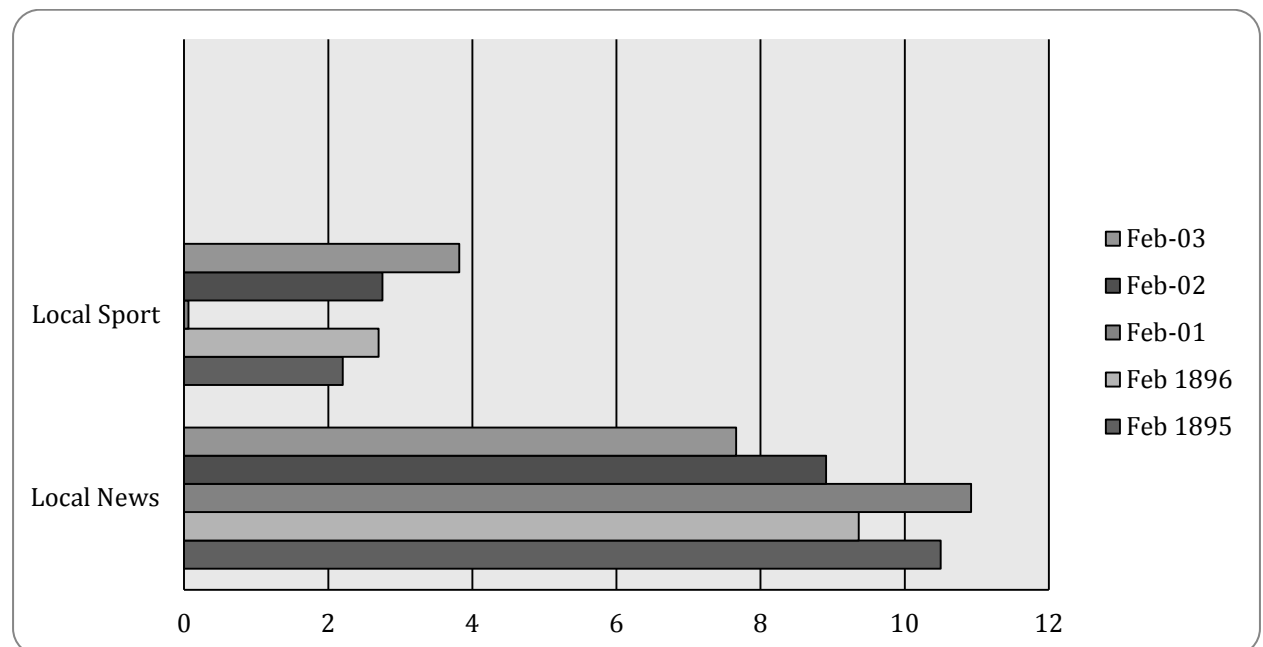
"In the Metropolis five lives were lost in four small fires on Saturday night.

"A lamp exploding on the third floor of the house in Mayfair, occupied by a Mr Willoughby, his wife, and child, was the cause of the outbreak. Mr Willoughby was terribly burned in his endeavour to put out the fire, and his wife and child were so badly burned that they died soon after. Three other lives were lost in three small outbreaks." (*MDT*, 3.2.1902, p3)



By February 1, 1897 the paper demonstrates an increased emphasis on local content; this includes the advent of the reader's letters on page two and an increased appearance of the word "Coventry" in headlines to highlight the local. On page three – still the main news page – the longest story in column inches is a lengthy report of a domestic tragedy at Foleshill (a district of Coventry). The headline has five decks and the story is split with dramatic sub decks including "Enveloped in Flames" and "His Wife Arrested".

However, while the impression is one of emphasis on local news, the quantitative analysis reveals that the actual proportions of local and national/international news are relatively stable during the period studied. Instead it is the use of labelling which gives priority to local content (Figure 1)



**Figure 1:** Local news and sport as a proportion of total column centimetres. Note low amount of sport in Feb 1901 due to reports of Queen Victoria's funeral.

Sport is also rising in prominence so that in Friday's edition of the paper (*MDT*, 5.2.1897) the usual serialisation gives way to previews of the next day's sport and in the final edition of Saturday's paper all of page three is given over to sporting news. Twelve months later and the significance of sport coverage to the paper's wellbeing is even more evident. Page two includes a total of 5.5 columns of adverts, one of which is entirely given over to a promotion for the football

edition of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* itself, promoting the paper as the foremost paper for local and national sporting news. It also seems likely that the paper has started to sponsor a local football league with the promotion of the “Telegraph Cup Ties” (*MDT*, 1.2.1898: 2).

Alongside the development of the sporting content in the *Midland Daily Telegraph* as a unique selling point, is the use of other promotional contents includes a coupon for readers to have their photographs taken in the form of *Midland Daily Telegraph* ‘craotint’ portraits (*MDT* 1.2.1898: 2). By 1902 this activity has grown so that the newspaper is promoting not only itself, but also the other newspapers in the company as advertising mediums, suggesting an increasing specialization in commercial practice.

“No other paper can possibly offer the same facilities to advertisers as The *Midland Daily Telegraph*, the only daily newspaper published within a radius of eighteen miles and thousands search the Advertising Columns daily. Please cut out and keep for future reference.” (*MDT*, 5.2.1902)

The cross-promotion also continues with pricing; so that 16 words in three editions of the *Midland Daily Telegraph*, costs 1/3 (one shilling and three pence) – and advertisers also get one insertion in each of the weekly papers as part of the package.

By 1903 the internal organization of the employees around commercial and editorial divisions is also evident in the columns of the paper itself, under the heading “Notice to Correspondents” – which is given due prominence inserted immediately above the “Topics of the Day” on page two.

“Letters regarding news and coming events should be addressed to the Editor. Letters containing, or having reference to advertisements should be forwarded to the Manager.

“In order that attention be given to forthcoming meetings and that this journal may be represented by a reported, it is essential that early intimation of these should be sent to our office.

“To avoid delay, letter being upon news or other matter for the paper, should not be addressed to individual members of the staff.

“All letters intended for insertion in these columns should be accompanied by the name and address of the writer, if only as a guarantee of good faith.

“We do not hold ourselves accountable for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.” (*MDT*, 2.2.1903: 2)

This announcement also implies that the newspaper receives a significant amount of correspondence from the public on a variety of matters – significant enough to demand that systems be set in place in order to ensure that they are efficiently dealt with.

A year later the *Midland Daily Telegraph* has invested in production methods; as boasted by its customary heading and it is noticeable via the copies available via the Local History Centre in Coventry that the clarity of the print is improved.

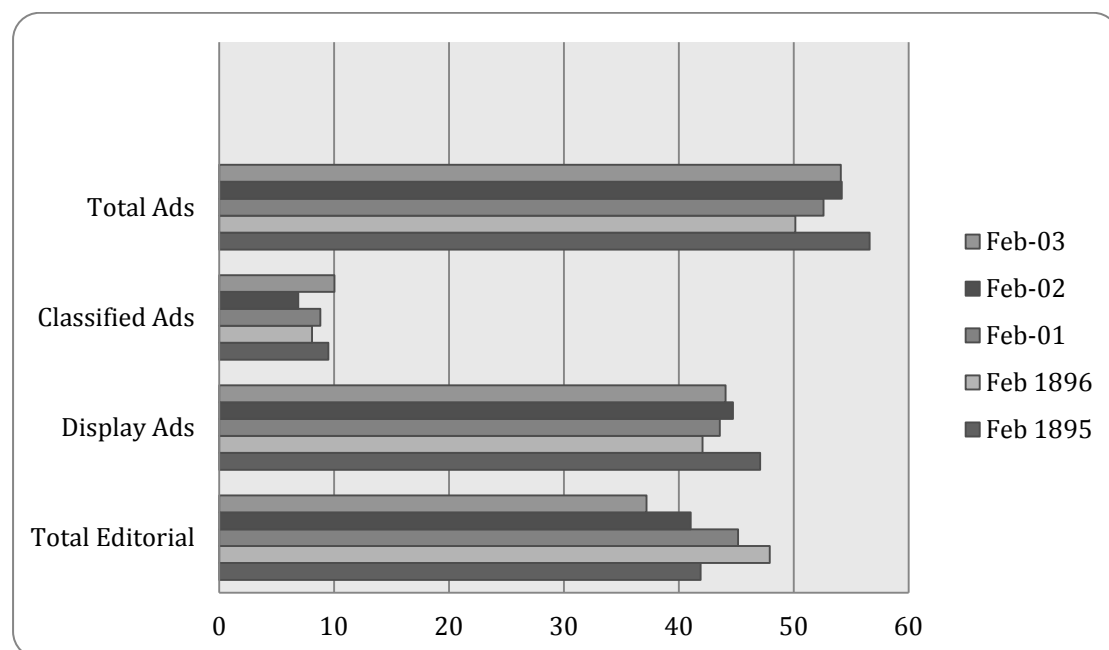
THE  
**Midland Daily Telegraph**  
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
*The North Warwickshire Times*  
*THIS PAPER IS SET UP BY LINOTYPE MACHINES  
AND IS PRINTED, FOLDED, CUT AND COUNTED  
AT THE RATE OF 24,000 COPIES PER HOUR BY  
ELECTRIC POWER.*

(*MDT*, 1.2.1904: 2)

The paper has also introduced a display advert to promote its own worth as an advertising medium because it “prints more paid want ads than all the other Coventry newspapers combined”. (*MDT*, 2.2.1904: 4).

This period is, therefore, one in which the paper becomes an effective and efficient advertising medium. Adverts become increasingly organised under classified headings or are presented as eye-catching display adverts, often with typography used to illustrative effective or increasingly with illustrations. By the

edition of February 7, 1902 the advertising content dominates page four, including the use of striking illustrations and layout alongside the well-organised and numerous classified adverts (appendix 2). During this period space devoted to adverts does not increase significantly, but instead the paper focuses on their design and organisation to increase impact. Conversely the *Midland Daily Telegraph* does develop its use of its own columns to promote itself, suggesting an increased awareness of its own development as a commercial enterprise. In 1895 just 1.2 per cent of the paper is dedicated to self-promotion. By 1902 this has jumped to 4.78 per cent and a year later it is 8.15 per cent. Promotional methods used include simple adverts, including using the valuable earpiece space (the adverts either side of the newspaper's masthead title) on page one, as well as coupons, picture sales and competitions.



**Figure 2:** Proportions of advertising and editorial *MDT* 1895-1903

By 1905 we see a newspaper which has matured into an established commercial advertising medium. Now set across eight columns but still priced one half penny, page one continues to carry adverts. Page two is also nearly 50 per cent adverts (editorial begins in the bottom quarter of the fourth column)

and adverts also take up two thirds of the final column on page three and all but one column of page four. In total the four pages have 32 columns, approximately 13.5 of these are devoted to editorial content, compared with the paper of Friday, February 1, 1895, when approximately 14 out of a possible 28 columns were devoted to editorial content.

The editorial which is in the 1905 paper is highlighted using small but clearer headlines set in a new sans serif font. "This Days News" has moved to page two and local news and sport is given prominence on page three, which leads on a murder trial in the city, which is given nearly two columns of space. With such a pressure on editorial space, it is perhaps not surprising that the news that there is presented in a brief and succinct way, as evidenced by the top story under the "Coventry and District" heading, in a style which mirrors that of the telegraphed national news.

"The Rev. George Smith Tyack, has been nominated as senior curate of St. Michael's Coventry, by the Vicar, the Rev. Canon Atkinson. Mr Tyack will come into residence on March 1<sup>st</sup>. He has been curate of St. Mary's Stafford since 1903." (*MDT*, 3.2.1905: 3)

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This close reading of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* between 1895 and 1905 makes explicit the parallel development of the use of the inverted pyramid as a news writing style with the development of a typical English regional evening paper as a sophisticated advertising medium. This reading would seem to suggest that this period marks an important period of commercial development for the *Midland Daily Telegraph*; within a relatively stable amount of space for advertising, we see more imaginative ways devoted to giving prominence to that content, which includes technical innovations around illustrations and layout before editorial sections. We also see an increased amount of self-promotion by the paper emphasising itself as an advertising medium. Coupled with this are indications that the paper has organized its staff along the division of advertising and editorial and has invested in improved production methods. At the same time this period has been a stable one for the cover price (one half-penny) indicating that advertising revenues have played a key role in funding investment in the product.

This suggests a strong commercial imperative for the dominance of this presentation of news in terms of making the paper more attractive to readers in line with Pottker's hypothesis, and it seems reasonable to suggest that the inverted pyramid – and parallel techniques associated with New Journalism – were not only adopted because of a transmission of practice between external sources of news and home-based reporting, as suggested by the coverage of the funeral of Queen Victoria, but also because of the physical constraints on space which demanded a succinct presentation of news. In tandem with this is the consolidation of advances in other areas of the newspaper previously noted, including increasing labelling of local news content, increased prominence of sport and a more sophisticated use of illustrations for commercial purposes. We also see the increased encroachment of adverts into page three; as the home to the 'late news' slot, this page is clearly the last to go to press and so by including late adverts, the length of time available to those who want to buy space is increased.

These techniques also improve the 'communicative' power of the news story and, therefore, enhance the commercial position of the newspaper. At the same time, these production values enable newspapers to be produced more quickly and efficiently, so enhancing their ability to be timely – which again enhances the capacity for increased sales. As such, the commercial context of the production of news becomes the driver for innovation in terms of the adoption of the inverted pyramid as increasingly specialist staff attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible in order to maximise the potential revenue from the advertisements which will be sold to them.

“The task of the journalist now no longer merely consisted of placing news arriving from outside sources into the paper in its original condition, but of preparing them for the reader by adapting their size, appearance, and textual and visual condition to the needs of the newspaper and its readers. By means of this 'inside-editing', the communicative quality of the texts improved considerably making them more understandable.” (Pottker, 2005: 61)

In this context, the commercial imperative becomes the driver for innovation, as evidenced by the organisation of staff, the use of illustrations (over-whelmingly applied to adverts) and even the use of new fonts to save editorial space when column inches are at a premium. The *MDT* is also still willing to devote valuable column inches to adverts for its own worth as a promotional medium – indicating the clear significance of advertising revenue to the newspaper.

Such is the power of this driver that the inverted pyramid gains dominance, even if, as Bell (1998:100) argues, it actually makes content less easy to understand than a straightforward chronological presentation. Because it privileges the prized media value of immediacy (being 'first with the news' is a key selling point), it still becomes the preferred method of presenting information.

What is not known about the *Midland Daily Telegraph* for this period are details of its business accounts; how many people worked to produce these titles, were they trained, how much was invested in equipment to produce it? Despite my best efforts, no archives supporting the history of the business have

been located and so this study focuses on the evidence presented by the paper itself alone to enable us to chart its commercial development. This analysis suggests that Pottker's rationale for the emergence of the inverted pyramid in US newspapers can be equally applied to the English regional evening newspaper, albeit some years later, but across a similar 10-year time scale. A replication of this study would also enable us to establish if this was consistent for titles across the country.



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**BENGER'S FOOD**  
For INFANTS  
INVALIDS, and the AGED.  
"Benger's Food is sold in this country by Messrs. J. & J. Benger, Ltd., London."

# The Midland Daily Telegraph.

**BIRI**  
Provision not on  
condition  
NO EGG

NO. 1234. VOL. VIII. FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1895.

**THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, COVENTRY.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Second Mrs. TANGLEWORTH.  
"The Girl of the Year."  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**THE THREE THOUSAND PAIRS OF LACE CURTAINS.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**THE MANCHESTER AND BRADFORD WAREHOUSE CO., LTD.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**ELECTRIC LIGHT.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**BAILEY'S PILLS.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**COCKS'S.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**COCKS'S.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**ELECTRIC LIGHT.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, &c.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**THE ADAMANTINE.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**THE ADAMANTINE.**  
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The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
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**ELECTRIC LIGHT.**  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.  
The Evening.  
By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
with the Hon. Mr. W. B. BERRY.

**Y. HOSIERY.**  
The Evening.  
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By the Royal Opera Company by arrangement  
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THE MIDLAND DAILY TELEGRAPH, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1902.

## Winter Colds

Doctor advised Scott's Emulsion rather than any other form of the oil

HERBERT TURNER

We are told in the old story that the best of all things is a good story. And this is true in the case of Scott's Emulsion. It is a story of a man who has been cured of a long and painful illness by the use of this medicine. The story is told in the words of the man himself, and it is a story that is worth reading by every one who is suffering from a winter cold or any other ailment.

Herbert Turner, of 10, North Street, Coventry, writes: "I have been suffering from a long and painful illness for many years. I have tried many different remedies, but nothing has done me any good. I have been advised to take Scott's Emulsion, and I have done so. I have now recovered my health, and I am able to do my work as usual. I am very grateful to the doctor who advised me to take Scott's Emulsion, and I am sure that it will do good to many other people who are suffering from similar ailments."

**TO CYCLISTS.**  
NORTH BRITISH RUBBER CO.  
24, EARL STREET, COVENTRY.

**COCKS'S.**  
55, EARL STREET, COVENTRY.

**FEARED WORK OF A BARREL.**  
A man who has been working for many years in a barrel factory has been advised to take Scott's Emulsion. He has done so, and he has now recovered his health. He is now able to do his work as usual, and he is very grateful to the doctor who advised him to take Scott's Emulsion.

ON BARRIS.

**COCKS'S.**  
55, EARL STREET, COVENTRY.

**MARKET HALL MUSIC STORES.**

**MUSIC OF EVERY KIND.**

**SENT VIDEOS TO TEACHERS.**

**MIDLAND DAILY TELEGRAPH.**

**WARWICK CASTLE.**

**ERLEWORTH CASTLE.**

**NINEPINCH RAIL.**

## GOSSIP OF THE DAY.

The Midland Daily Telegraph has been informed that the following persons have been appointed to the following positions:

**APPOINTMENTS.**  
The following persons have been appointed to the following positions:

**DEPARTURES.**  
The following persons have departed from the following positions:

**ARRIVALS.**  
The following persons have arrived at the following positions:

## For all Chronic Lung Troubles

After suffering from chronic lung troubles for many years, the writer has been cured by the use of Angier's Emulsion. The writer is now able to do his work as usual, and he is very grateful to the doctor who advised him to take Angier's Emulsion.

## Angier's Emulsion

Prescribed by the Medical Profession and used in the Hospitals.

## UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS.

**After Pleurisy.**  
After suffering from pleurisy for many years, the writer has been cured by the use of Angier's Emulsion. The writer is now able to do his work as usual, and he is very grateful to the doctor who advised him to take Angier's Emulsion.

**After Influenza.**  
After suffering from influenza for many years, the writer has been cured by the use of Angier's Emulsion. The writer is now able to do his work as usual, and he is very grateful to the doctor who advised him to take Angier's Emulsion.

**After Pneumonia.**  
After suffering from pneumonia for many years, the writer has been cured by the use of Angier's Emulsion. The writer is now able to do his work as usual, and he is very grateful to the doctor who advised him to take Angier's Emulsion.

**After Bronchitis.**  
After suffering from bronchitis for many years, the writer has been cured by the use of Angier's Emulsion. The writer is now able to do his work as usual, and he is very grateful to the doctor who advised him to take Angier's Emulsion.

**CAUTION.**  
Be sure to get Angier's Emulsion. It is the only one that is prescribed by the Medical Profession and used in the Hospitals.

## POPULARITY

**C. H. PRICE & SONS, OF BIRMINGHAM.**  
LATE FOR 12 YEARS DIRECTOR OF THE BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY.  
LATE FOR 12 YEARS DIRECTOR OF THE BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY.

**FURNITURE, &c., FOR SALE.**  
A large quantity of furniture, including sofas, chairs, tables, and beds, for sale at a low price. The furniture is of the highest quality and is suitable for any home.

**FOR SALE AND WANTED.**  
A large quantity of furniture, including sofas, chairs, tables, and beds, for sale at a low price. The furniture is of the highest quality and is suitable for any home.

**REPAIRS AND APPOINTMENTS.**  
A large quantity of furniture, including sofas, chairs, tables, and beds, for sale at a low price. The furniture is of the highest quality and is suitable for any home.